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Special report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), in which the Council requested me to report on the outcome of the June 2008 Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan and to include in the report, if necessary, further recommendations concerning the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

2. The Paris Conference, held on 12 June 2008, resulted in pledges of international assistance totalling approximately $20 billion. However, the Paris Conference was more than a pledging event. With the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy in Paris, some 80 international stakeholders agreed to a road map under Afghan leadership, to be implemented through a strengthened partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. The Paris Declaration, issued under the authority of the three co-chairs, the President of Afghanistan, the President of France and myself, identified the key elements that would be essential for the future security and prosperity of the Afghan people. It also underlined the expanded role of my Special Representative and of UNAMA to lead international efforts and to coordinate between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community.

3. The Paris Declaration reaffirmed that the Afghanistan Compact, agreed to in London in February 2006, remains the basis for the common effort between the international community and the Government of Afghanistan. A review of the Afghanistan Compact was prepared by the co-chairs of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in advance of the Paris Conference. Its substantive conclusions were endorsed by the participants at the Conference.

4. Since taking up office as my Special Representative for Afghanistan on 27 March 2008, Kai Eide has established effective working relationships with Afghan leaders and the international community. He has thoroughly analysed the situation in the Mission area and ascertained key priorities that must be addressed in order for UNAMA to achieve its mandate. On the basis of that assessment, Mr. Eide recommended that the priorities identified at the Paris Conference be sufficiently covered by the mandate of UNAMA, as set out in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008). I fully endorse this recommendation. I also endorse Mr. Eide's

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recommendation that in order for UNAMA to fulfil its mandate and achieve the Paris priorities, much greater substantive, administrative and security resources would need to be expeditiously mobilized.

II. Security overview

5. Since my last report, dated 6 March 2008 (A/62/722-S/2008/159), the level of insurgent and terrorist activity in Afghanistan has increased, particularly in the south and east of the country. This increase can be attributed partly to the onset of summer. Nonetheless, it is of great concern that the highest number of security incidents in the country since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001 was recorded in May 2008. The insurgents continue to rely on asymmetric attacks, resulting in high levels of civilian casualties. Their operations are becoming increasingly complex and coordinated, as demonstrated by the attack during a military parade in Kabul in April 2008 and the operation to free prisoners from Kandahar Prison in June 2008.

6. The evolving security situation throughout the country will require a considerable increase in security-related mission resources, not only for the establishment of new provincial offices in higher security risk areas, but also for existing field offices and Mission activities as a whole.

III. Priorities

7. While the main objectives of UNAMA, as identified in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), should remain unchanged, the following areas require greater attention.

A. Elections

8. The Paris Declaration underlined the importance of holding free, fair and secure elections in 2009 and 2010 as a crucial step to consolidate democracy for all Afghans. The international community pledged its strong support to meet those goals. At the request of President Karzai, and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), UNAMA will lead and coordinate its international partners to ensure coherent and integrated support to Afghan authorities in the electoral process and, in particular, to the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission. It is important to ensure that decisions and preparations are made expeditiously in order to provide sufficient time for each phase of the electoral process to be credibly completed. Decisions on election processes should reflect a broad national consensus. The challenges related to practical preparations, resources and security will be significant. UNAMA is strengthening its electoral capacity and interacting on a daily basis with the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission. In addition to the coordination role played by UNAMA, the United Nations Development Programme is implementing a project which is designed to build the capacity of the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission and provide necessary technical assistance.

B. Afghanistan National Development Strategy

9. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy is the road map for joint action over the next five years. It is based on the Millennium Development Goals and the Afghanistan Compact and covers three broad areas: security (nationwide stabilization, strengthened law enforcement and improved personal security for every Afghan); governance, rule of law and human rights (strengthening democratic practice and institutions, human rights, rule of law, delivery of public services and Government accountability); and economic and social development (poverty reduction, ensuring sustainable development through a private sector-led market economy, improvement of human development indicators and significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals). Implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will require strong backing from the international community, which must align its resources according to the priorities set by the Strategy. UNAMA will have to play the key role in guiding and promoting such support. This new focus will have to be reflected in the Mission's internal organizational structure and will require resources and expertise that are currently not available in UNAMA.

C. Governance and institution-building

10. Expanded delivery of basic services and economic growth will require a stronger institutional base at the central as well as subnational levels. One of the priorities of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy is the establishment of stronger institutions in order to ensure that the progress achieved in Afghanistan is sustained and that trust in the Government is increased by improving public administration, local governance, justice, police and other law enforcement institutions. This will require an ambitious and comprehensive approach to institution-building. While significant efforts have been made in this area, they have so far been insufficient and fragmented. Priority attention needs to be given to: (a) providing support to police reform through substantial investments in leadership and accountability as well as training, mentoring and equipping a growing number of police personnel; (b) strengthening the rule of law by supporting the National Justice Programme and National Justice Strategy and addressing more forcefully impunity and corruption; and (c) providing support to public administration reform in order to effect stronger and more professional governance. In addition to providing Afghans with essential Government services, these will be of critical importance to create the popular support required to help combat the insurgency. UNAMA will have to recruit additional personnel in order to increase its efforts to support institution-building and ensure that programmes to this effect are well coordinated and firmly based on the needs of Afghan society.

D. Implementing the economic priorities of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy

11. Implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will require the development of certain key sectors of the economy. While Afghanistan will continue to need assistance in every area, the Strategy attaches particular attention to stimulating investments in infrastructure, especially in the agriculture

and energy sectors. Those sectors have been given priority because they underpin the livelihoods of Afghans while enabling other sectors of the economy to grow, thus allowing Afghanistan to move gradually out of a situation of aid dependency. A further priority is support for private sector development. UNAMA will have to assist in ensuring that those priorities are properly addressed, while continuing to stress the importance of road construction, education and health. In order to support the priorities of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, UNAMA will need additional resources and expertise. Close cooperation with other international organizations and institutions, such as the World Bank, will also be necessary.

E. Aid effectiveness and increased accountability

12. At the Paris Conference, donors committed themselves to improving aid effectiveness and ensuring that the benefits of development become tangible for all Afghans. They agreed not only to provide greater resources, but also to make this assistance more predictable, transparent and accountable. Furthermore, they agreed that their assistance should be delivered in a more coordinated way and channelled increasingly through the national budget, as strengthened and accountable Government institutions acquire greater capacity for management. The donors committed themselves to increasing the use of local procurement and capacity-building and to ensuring that the benefits of development can reach all provinces equitably. UNAMA will play a key role in ensuring that donors meet those commitments. This will require the recruitment of additional expertise in UNAMA dedicated to aid effectiveness as well as adjustments to coordination mechanisms in order to make them more efficient and delivery-oriented.

13. The Government of Afghanistan reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying its actions against corruption and to taking concrete steps to that effect. The international community will support such actions. At the Paris Conference, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community agreed to undertake professional audits, including joint audits of programmes financed through the core and external budgets, and to strengthen Government capacities. UNAMA will need to cooperate closely with other international bodies as well as to strengthen its own expertise to help implement those commitments.

14. Altogether, the coordinating role of UNAMA will be demanding and will have to be more distinctly reflected in its structure and its personnel establishment.

F. Humanitarian action

15. The provision of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan remains essential. In 2008, factors such as natural disasters, food insecurity and ongoing conflict have deepened the vulnerability of populations and increased the humanitarian caseload. Food insecurity in particular, as a result of poor harvests and drought in Afghanistan, has been exacerbated by the global rise in food prices and has the potential to undermine growth and stability, in addition to causing widespread malnourishment. Therefore, it will be necessary for UNAMA and its partners to strengthen their ability to forecast, assess and respond to humanitarian crises as well as bolster their capacity for coordination. In all likelihood Afghanistan will be faced with a worsening food situation in the coming months. Therefore, a new food appeal

is being prepared by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. Efforts are also under way to focus increased attention and to take action on the protection concerns of Afghans affected by conflict and to strengthen humanitarian access and response to those vulnerable populations.

G. Regional cooperation

16. Countries neighbouring Afghanistan have an essential role to play in providing support to the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to build a stable State with secure borders. Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) highlights the need for UNAMA to support regional cooperation to work towards stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. My Special Representative has reported to me on his fruitful visits to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and of his intention to visit other countries in the region in the near future. This first round of engagements, conducted at the highest political level, has confirmed that regional neighbours view UNAMA as a trusted partner in promoting regional dialogue and cooperation. In order to develop regional cooperation and build on the goodwill shown to my Special Representative thus far, it will be essential for him to conduct regular and constructive consultations in regional capitals.

H. Other ongoing priorities

17. In addition to the areas outlined above, other issues will continue to require the attention of UNAMA. The protection of human rights is central to peace and development, is fundamental to success in each of the critical areas identified and, therefore, remains a high priority on the agenda of UNAMA. The Mission is committed to strengthening its capacity to monitor and investigate violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, including in the context of the armed conflict. In this regard, it will be important to continue to provide support to Afghan civil society in the promotion of respect for human rights. UNAMA will concentrate its efforts, inter alia, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, child protection, advancing the rights of women, securing access to justice and respect for freedom of expression.

18. Reducing the production and trafficking of narcotics, which was identified as a cross-cutting issue in the Afghanistan Compact, must remain an ongoing priority. Measures to counter the illegal production and trafficking of narcotics will be effective only when they are integrated into the wider efforts to support security, governance, the rule of law and human rights, economic and social development, and particularly rural development. UNAMA, through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will coordinate practical assistance from the international community and provide technical advice to support the Government's anti-narcotics strategy. In this regard, I welcome the adoption by the Security Council on 11 June 2008 of resolution 1817 (2008), which calls for strengthened international cooperation against the illegal use of chemical precursors.

19. UNAMA will also work to improve civil-military coordination. Such coordination will be conducted within existing mandates of the various actors in order to facilitate the timely exchange of information and uphold humanitarian principles. It will be based firmly on the need for military action to be aligned with

a political strategy that reinforces the role of legitimate Government institutions and will be developed in such a way that safeguards the integrity of the Mission's own mandate and its role in the humanitarian and political fields.

20. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), UNAMA, if requested by the Government of Afghanistan, will provide good offices to support the implementation of Afghan-led reconciliation programmes, within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and with full respect for the implementation of measures introduced by the Security Council in its resolution 1267 (1999) and other relevant resolutions.

I. Expansion of field activities

21. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1806 (2008), UNAMA will also reinforce its outreach efforts by expanding its presence throughout the country. On the basis of the assessment of my Special Representative, I recommend that UNAMA proceed with the further expansion of its field presence by opening six new provincial offices over the next 12 months. The first phase of expansion would include the opening of two offices, one in Tirin Kot, Uruzgan Province and another in Pul-i-Khumri, Baghlan Province. Needless to say, the establishment of any new office by UNAMA will be undertaken with concern for the security of staff members as a matter of highest priority. Furthermore, such offices will be opened when and where the Mission's presence can play a significant role in the implementation of its mandate, including outreach to disaffected communities and to areas of greatest need.

IV. Delivering the priorities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

22. The expectations currently placed upon UNAMA by the Security Council, the international community and the people of Afghanistan are high. In order to ensure the Mission's ability to deliver support in the areas of priority identified in the mandate and at the Paris Conference, it will be necessary, as outlined above, to strengthen the Mission's capacity in a number of key areas with concurrent, and in some cases significant, staffing increases and possible structural changes.

23. The Mission should be staffed and structured to reflect what my Special Representative needs to achieve. Addressing current priorities will require additional personnel in the areas of elections, support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, aid effectiveness, institution-building and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In addition to the key challenge of overall coordination and the establishment of new field offices, this means that emphasis will have to be placed on the recruitment of additional qualified personnel. Furthermore, greater effort will be invested in improved coordination and planning of the United Nations Country Team, both in terms of development, through the drafting of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Afghanistan, and on humanitarian affairs, with the drafting of the Humanitarian Action Plan. Those two plans for the United Nations Country Team aim to bring about a more coherent and effective response from the United Nations in Afghanistan in 2008, which was emphasized most recently in the Paris Declaration.

24. In addition to an increase in personnel, UNAMA will need greater resources for staff security and welfare, in particular for those who work in the field. A significant increase in administrative personnel will be required to meet the demands of an expanded mission working under difficult circumstances.

V. Observations

25. The extent to which UNAMA can fulfil its mandate will ultimately depend upon the degree to which international partners and the Government of Afghanistan support the enhanced coordinating role of UNAMA and live up to the commitments they undertook at the Paris Conference. I am grateful for the strong and generous reception given to my Special Representative in his first three months in Kabul and to the ongoing support for UNAMA from both the international community and the Government of Afghanistan. Together with its Afghan and international partners, UNAMA will improve coordination mechanisms in a way that respects Afghan ownership and facilitates a more robust and delivery-oriented coordination process.

26. The priorities outlined in the present report reflect how UNAMA will fulfil its responsibilities with regard to its mandate and to the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy. As noted above, meeting those priorities will require significant resources in terms of personnel and security, which I hope will be supported by all Member States of the United Nations.

27. Finally, I strongly endorse the need that my Special Representative has stressed, at the Paris Conference and elsewhere, to focus our efforts on what remains our collective goal: improving the lives of the Afghan people.